

Question 1

Critically examine the evolution of Pakistan's democratic system since 1971. How have civil-military relations shaped democratic continuity and instability?

1) Introduction:

Since 1971 Pakistan has oscillated between interrupted civil-military influence. The military has repeatedly acted as both direct ruler by imposing martial law and constitutional maker. The military has alternated between direct intervention via coups or martial law, as in 1977 and 1999 and indirect control via political engineering and influence over the judiciary, media and bureaucracy.

2) Evolution of Pakistan's democratic system:

2.1) 1971-1977: Post-1971 consolidation:

After the loss of east Pakistan, Bhutto pursued populist / party-state consolidation but also centralised power and failed to institutionalize democracy. While Bhutto reasserted civilian authority and temporarily reduced the military's direct role, he has centralized power. This mix of authoritarianism and populism

Created new tensions with conservative and military forces. By 1977, growing political polarization, economic troubles and disputed elections eroded Bhutto's legitimacy and gave an opportunity to military to intervene once again.

2.2) Zia's martial law and Constitutional engineering.

General Zia Overthrew Bhutto's government on July, 1977, imposed martial law and used constitutional amendments and Islamization to reshape politics and institutions, notably the 8th amendment which bolstered presidential powers and altered the parliamentary balance. Zia's certain Islamic strict policies based on sharia faced severe criticism and strict enforcement further fragiled the democracy. Zia institutionalize the military's role as permanent guardian of the state. By the time of his death in 1988, Pakistan's political order has been transformed into a hybrid system.

2.3) Democratic interludes with weak civilian government (1989-1999):

After Zia's death in 1988, Pakistan formally returned to civilian rule by alternating governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

However, democracy was not flourished

due to institutional weakness, factional rivalry and military's indirect intervention. The military though, no longer in power retained influence through the presidency and control over key political areas such as defense and foreign affairs. The **8th amendment** continued to empower the president to dismiss elected governments producing a cycle of instability and short-lived administrations.

Frequent confrontations between the executive, judiciary and opposition eroded public confidence and prevented institutional confidence.

2.4) Musharraf's coup and managed democracy (1999-2008):-

Pervez Musharraf removed Nawaz Sharif on October 1999 and ruled as chief executive and president. Musharraf introduced local government reforms and held an elections (2002) to give his regime a civilian facade. The **17th amendment (2003)** legalized his actions and gave the president strong powers, including the right to dissolve assembly. His government allied closely with the United States after (9/11) in favour of Pakistan's national foreign policy interest and to exterminate the terrorist in Afghanistan. People saw economic growth and media expansion. Certain conflicts with Judiciary and on dismissal of Justice Munir Iftikhar lead to wide mass protest.

and public outrage compelled him to resign in 2008. Amid these circumstances Musharraf negotiated political deals to extend his tenure such as National Reconciliation Order (NRO) which granted amnesty to political leaders was also a major setback to democracy as it promoted elite bargaining and undermined accountability.

2.5) Competitive politics and partial civilian consolidation:-

After Musharraf's resignation in 2008, Pakistan entered a new phase of competitive civilian politics marked by regular elections and peaceful transfer of power between rival parties. The PPP and PMLN governments first time in the political landscape of Pakistan's history saw the peaceful transfer of power and uninterrupted decade of civilian rule since 1970s.

A major milestone was 18th Amendment (2010) which restored parliamentary supremacy and rolled back many of the president's discretionary powers, supremacy and expanded provincial autonomy promoting and consolidating democracy. However, political marginalization and fragmentation was deepened.

As Hamid Khan (political and constitutional history of Pakistan), military continued to exert influence

through extraconstitutional means.
Despite genuine progress in civilian governance and constitutional reform democratic institutions were undermined due to indirect military interventions though it was also need of the time.

2.6) (2018-2025) ongoing civil-Military relations:

PTI's rise to power under the leadership of Imran Khan in 2018 marked a new stage in Pakistan's civil-military relations. His government's promises to reform governance and accountability over time differences between civilian institutions and military emerged on issues such as foreign policy and military appointments, leading to strained relations. These tensions culminated in Imran Khan's ouster through vote of No confidence in 2022. Subsequent mass protests, arrests and legal battles undermined democracy.

3) HOW Civil-Military relations has shaped Continuity and instability:

The military has influenced via several mechanisms:-

3.1) Direct Military Interventions:

Direct military interventions in 1977 and 1999 temporarily halted civilian governance and weakened institutional continuity.

3.2) Constitutional Engineering:

Military regimes and other civilian partners used constitutional amendments to consolidate executive authority, for instance 8th amendment under the Zia's regime and the 17th amendment, under Eighteenth amendment undermining and underscoring democracy respectively. 18th amendment is a significant step towards rebalancing democratic authority.

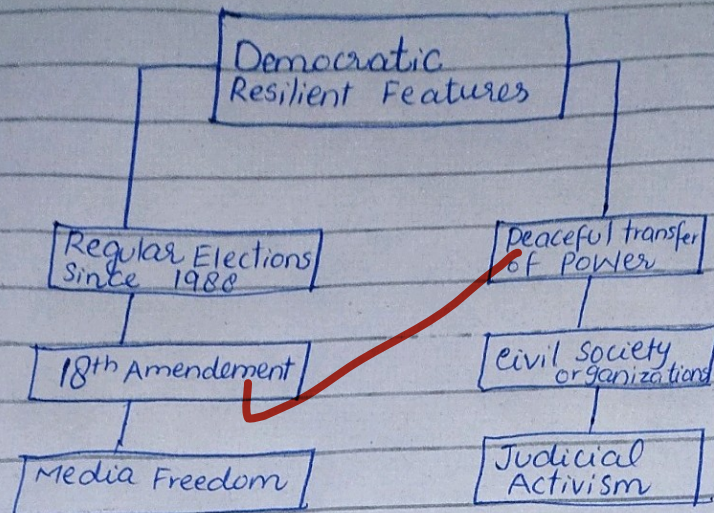
3.3) Institutional influence and politicized accountability:-

Such actions blur the line between legal accountability and political consolidation, leveraged by politicians.

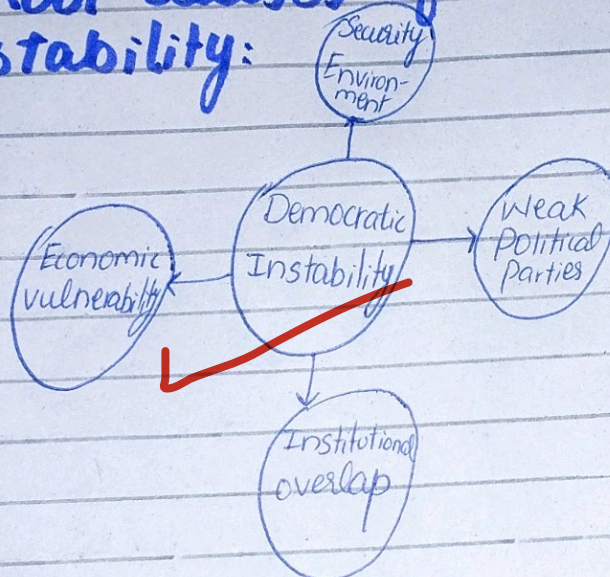
3.4) Security Paradigms and Legitimacy claim:

Pakistan's military was the need of hour during the internal and external security threats (India, insurgency, terrorism). The fact can not be denied that military plays a key role in counter-terrorism and weak civilian government for the welfare of people.

4) Democratic continuity: Pakistan has developed resilient democratic features:-



5) Root causes of the democratic instability:



add a few more arguments in this part.....

6) Conclusion:-

Pakistan's democratic history since 1971 was a turmoil landscape between fluctuating civil and Military.

Military interventions although was need of the time but democracy was undermined. After 2007, civilian institutions flourished but suffered with political fragmentation and lack of accountability and public chaos. Durable democratic consolidations will require strengthening civilian institutions with transparency and accountability.